Annual Report

of

The "Committee on Public Morals" to the Society of Inquiry Aug. 1836

(Presented by D. J. Waller)

The Committee beg leave to remark, that on account of the number of subjects assigned to them for investigation, and the diversity of their character, they hope that the Soc. will excuse the desultory character of their Annual Report

1st Temperance.

Though no vice can be eradicated by a reform which does not renovate the heart, and purify the secret springs of action, yet the unexampled success which has attended the great effort in behalf of temperance, proves that overgrown vices, may be repressed by energy and united action, on the part of suffering communities. The "American Temperance Society" was founded in 1826. At that time the first great effort was made. And those Philanthropists who have caused the world to feel their influence, then united themselves together for the purpose of staying the progress and rolling back the tide of the most wide spread evil, – one which threatened the existance of society. Especially, within the previous fifty years, had intemperance been making fearful progress, within the United States. Until at this period, not only the circumscribed community or little neighborhood, but the still ~~more~~ smaller and more sacred family circle, could scarcely be found, where this blighting curse, had not fallen. Fathers sought their souls to offer their morning and evening sacrifices at the Shrine of Bacchus, until reason and self government gave way to the ardor of their devotion, and the father, the husband, and the beloved child, became the abject slaves of appetite and passion.

The evil was not confined to the United States. Wherever the Arabian extract was known, effects of a similar nature were produced. Intoxication, and an unnatural appetite most insatiable in its demands, were the constant attendants of alcohol. Thus armed, it was the most dauntless and promising champion, ever sent from hell, for the destruction of God's government on earth. But nowhere else had it made such fearfully rapid strides towards perfect conquest, as in our own enlightened country. The genius of our government tends to set every citizen free from all those despotisms to which man is accustomed to submit. And according to the principles of our nature, when all human restraint is removed, we bow in submission to our passions or to God. — Taking advantage of this constitution, the fell destroyer had here put forth his strongest efforts. Nothing was at this period, more common than the melancholy spectacle of a man of fair reputation, who had acquired a competency by unremitted toil in the prime of life, yielding himself up in his declining years, to this most degrading and loathsome vice. Thus, not only ruining his own soul and shortening his probation, but exerting a tremendous demoralising influence upon society, and leaving his family in poverty, — the miserable slaves of the same factitious appetite. In this way was that class of men To whom our country looks for its most valuable citizens, becoming abandoned and worthless, and instead of the bone and sinew of the nation, — the poison which drank its very life blood. Even some of the highest dignitaries in the Church were not uncontaminated.

But upon this part of our subject, it is unnecessary to enlarge. The picture is probably still vividly impressed upon the recollection of many in this society. And though its great outline, has been in part effaced, yet many of its most offensive features stand out in disgusting relief. It is our main object to give a brief account of what has been accomplished during the last year, and what remains to be accomplished by the friends of temperance. Commencing with our own county, your committee report that they can discover no ground for discouragement to effort in this worthy undertaking. Yet it becomes their painful duty to state, that the general subject has not received that attention from its friends, during the past year, which has been bestowed upon it in previous years, and which as much as ever, it deserves and needs. Rev E.N. Kirk, of Albany, stated to the general Association of Connecticut, that of 37 Presbyteries in our Church, which reported upon the subject 25 represented the temperance cause as advancing, and 26 represented it as stationary, or declining in influence within their borders. Though this is an unfavorable light aspect in which we are called to view the temperance reformation there are numerous other facts which afford matter for congratulation. Yet they do not destroy this one, which ought to be so startling to every well wisher of his country. Does not this report from different Sections of our own Church speak to us my brethren, in a language not to be mistaken. If Presbyterians, who are tacitly acknowledged to be foremost in every good work, do not act with energy and perseverance what shall become of any projects for the general advancement of morals?

Though the progress of the temperance cause is so extend

that no adequa… conclusion can be formed
from any statistic… be crowded into a brief
report, get it … adduce a few, to show
the temperance … in some sections of
the world.

In reference to the testimony of Physicians to the injurious nature of alcohol, as a beverage, it is known to be almost universal. "Seventy seven Medical Practitioners in Edinburgh, have given the following Testimony – 'We the undersigned, do hereby declare our conviction, that ardent spirits are not to be regarded as a nourishing article of diet; that the use of them is a principal cause of disease, poverty, and misery, in this place; and that the entire disuse of them would powerfully contribute to improve the health and comfort of the community." Forty eight Physicians and Surgeons in the city of Dublin signed the following declaration.- 'We the undersigned, do hereby declare that in our opinion, nothing … to the improvement of the health of … entire disuse of ardent spirits, which … productive cause of the disease, and … and wretchedness of the working classes … opinion which is supported by the … al men, we have heard no dissenting … the Stamps of the following

Thus we see that men's judgments may agree with their appetite and practice. A fact worthy of mention was related to the writer of this report since the commencement of the present session. A gentleman, of our acquaintance informed us that in coming from Peoria, Ill. to Philadelphia, he had not seen more than five persons drink ardent spirits on board the

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hundreds of miles on the respective rivers. There was one which was built, not exactly in the 'Far West,' but two hundred and fifty miles up the Missouri, another upon Fever River, near Galena; and the others at various places on the Ohio river. All of them arrived, and have departed, or will leave with full freight, and many passengers. On Wednesday, the Diana started for the Yellow Stone river, about 2000 miles up the Missouri, and another for St. Peters, 700 miles on the Upper Mississippi. During the week several have left, or will leave for New Orleans, and others again for Pittsburg. Regular packets run almost daily up the Illinois River.

North Carolina.—The Convention for amending the Constitution of this State assembled at Raleigh on Thursday last, the 4th instant. The venerable Nathaniel Macon was unanimously elected President of the body.

Fatal Accident.—On Saturday last, as two little boys were playing amongst the ruins of some houses which had been pulled down at the corner of Duane and Witham streets, a portion of wall which was left standing fell on them, and crushed them both to death. A coroner's jury was summoned, and on inquiry returned a verdict of accidental death.—*N. Y. Paper.*

Affair at Hartford.—Extract of a letter dated Hartford, June 9th:—Last night about 10 o'clock, our peace-

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Notice.

The public having been notified some-

Boys', Misses and Children's do.
Men's coarse and fine Mon
…roes.
Cash or country produce will be ta-
ken in payment for work.
JOSEPH T. PRESTON.
Kingston, April 6, 1836. 1y

Steam and canal boats, though there was uniformly brandy on the dinner table. The authority was such as to leave no ground to doubt the truth of the narration. Yet we fear that few persons who have performed the journey, can speak as well for the morals of the travelling community.

The great internal improvements, projected by the State of Indiana, are to be constructed without the use of ardent spirits. Indeed every section of our country is becoming convinced that the use of alcohol inimical to the public weal. It is dangerous to him who traffickes in it, as well as to him who consumes it.

*"It is found," says Judge Platt, "that of the tavern-keepers and retailers of ardent spirit in the state of N. York, during the last forty years, *more than two-thirds have become drunkards*, and reduced their families to poverty and wretchedness!"

The cause of temperance is making rapid progress in Great Britain and Ireland, as also in Germany. Sweden, the number of whose drunkards has made it a by-word, has also commenced a reform which promises to redeem the nation from its present degraded State. Russia too,-of which we might ask, "can any good thing come out of her", is beginning to consider and act upon this important subject. Prussia is beginning feel the necessity of reform. And the countries bordering upon the Mediterranean, testify that the leaven is working in them. "One of the oldest Merchants in Smyrna writes that he will no longer deal in the article or even it's price current in Letters to his correspondents". And we are happy as well as proud to say that the American consuls, in most of the Mediterranean ports, are engaging with zeal in this work of reform. "A gentleman from Calcutta gives a very interesting account of a temperance meeting in that city. In Burmah, Malacca, and in China the cause is exciting increased attention; Numbers are feeling more deeply its importance, especially in its

FACTS.

Ten years ago there were thirty distil eries in Hampshire county, Mass, now there is none.

Mr. Lawrence, president of the late temperance convention in Pennsylvania, stated that a few years since there were in a circuit of three miles in Washington county, Pa., thirty distileries, only two of which are now in operation and about to cease.

The Union Engine Company No, 2, Cambridge, Mass., recently voted to exclude at their meetings all ardent spirits and wine.

The authorities of five whole counties in Massachusetts have wholly refused to grant retailers licences.

Two thousand ladies in Boston petition ed the authorities to withhold licenses in 1835.

In 1832 there were in Boston seven hundred and nine dram shops, in 1836 there were only three hundred and nine.

In the town of Leicester, Mass., in the year 1828, the cost of ardent spirit consumed by the people of the town, was as nearly as could be ascertained, $5,823, in 1834 it was $600.

At a festival held in Boston in March 1836, at the opening of the free communication between the city of Charleston, the governor of the commonwealth, many members of the legislature, and numerous other distinguished citizens being present, there was much hearty and rational rejoicing, but no intoxicating liquor.—*Merc. Jour.*

The annual saving of insurance in the United States paid on the tonage in shipping in 1825 was, according to the Bethel Magazine, [p. 219. vol. 1.,] $65,775,25, in consequence of the deduction of five per cent on temperance vessels.

In February, the Montreal temperance society contributed to the funds of the general hospital 5l. 10s., the proceeds of tickets for their two meetings in that month.

Toronto, U. C., Montreal, L. C., and Halifax, N. S., have each a paper devoted exclusively to temperance. New England has five, New-York three, Ohio two, and several other states one each.

Five thousand females of Philadelphia, presented a memorial to the state legislature of Pennsylvania; praying the magistrates to restrict licenses.

More than 2,000 citizens of Boston, headed by John C. Warren, John Binney, and other distinguished citizens, petitioned the mayor and common council of Boston to withhold licenses.

connexion with the Spread of the gospel, and are making new efforts to extend it. The natives of Ceylon have also taken up the cause of temperance with such spirit as to inspire strong hopes of their final and speedy success. Dr. Philips writes from South Africa, "At our missionary stations we have found temperance societies to be what a person at one of our stations calls them, John the Baptist. They are sent to prepare the way of the Lord. Our missionaries have found them most valuable auxiliaries in promoting the cause of God in Africa." Temperance societies have also been formed and have accomplished great good in New Holland. A publication from that country, shows the soundness of the views entertained there, in the following remarks. "Societies have at various times been formed in Scotland and other places, the object of which was to prevent excess in the use of ardent spirits, not to exclude them; but they have universally come to nothing. They proved themselves unsound in principle and therefore could not stand. They did not set out with the incontrovertable truth that ardent spirit is a poison to both soul and body. That it is a poison to the body, of a very active kind, we have abundant proof from the fact that in this colony, it produces numerous diseases, and destroys the inhabitants of Hobart Town so rapidly that they do not, on an average, live to more than the age of twenty three years; while the prisioners at Macquarrie Harbour, who are excluded from the use of spirit, live on an average, to thirty five years, notwithstanding the privations they undergo in being limited to salt provisions. That spirit is a poison to the soul, any person who uses it and attends to the state of his own mind will readily ascertain. He will find that after having taken but a single glass, his moral perceptions of

right and wrong are beclouded, and his moral powers of resisting temptations diminished. Sin no longer appears so sinful as it did, and having weakened the powers of resistance, he runs the more rapidly into it. How cheering is it to see such elevated sentiments, from such a country, supported by a clearness and strength of argument which has been rarely surpassed? Such a state of things should encourage us to hope for the speedy fulfillment of the promise, "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

A still more interesting branch of this subject, is the progress of temperance amongst seamen. It is well known that one of the greatest obstacles to the success of Missionary labor in those portions of the heathen world which border upon the ocean, is the immoral example of sailors, from our own country, and from England. Intemperance is the worst feature of this example, — inasmuch as, by following it, the natives immediately fall into that state in which no instruction can reach their understanding. The impossibility of remedying this evil in any other way than by reforming our seamen, has called the attention and efforts, of praying men to the subject. We shall adduce a few facts to show the success of these efforts. — The "Old Colony Association", in their report to the General Association of Massachusetts, say. "In our association district, more is done, in the cause of Foreign Missions, than any other, in some respects. The mutual dependance and benefits of foreign Missions and whaling are more and more developed every year. It is not easy to say which is the debtor. Of the four thousand whalemen, now

upon the water, scattered over all oceans and seas, there are very few who are not favourable to foreign Missions. Many of them on their return from their voyages, bring to their ministers, their honest half dollar, for the support of the missions." The cause of Temperance is represented, as in a flourishing condition state, by all the Associations in the maritime district of that State. Something may be judged respecting the Temperance spirit of Boston Sailors, from which

Temperance.—The following notice was circulated in Boston and brought together upwards of 500 seamen in the Seamen's Chapel. Dr. Beecher, their "old Commodore," as they term him, delivered a most powerful address. After which a subscription paper was handed round, and between sixty and seventy sailors, including some masters and mates of vessels, affixed their signature to a declaration of independence, against King Alcohol.

A Grand Temperance Meeting.

Brother Sailors! A real windward anchor Temperance Meeting will be held at the Mariner's Church on Fort Hill, Purchase street, this evening, at a quarter before 8 o'clock. Dr. Beecher will be there and address the meeting. He will fire a gun worth hearing. So bear a hand and be at the church in time, for the landsmen will be there in shoals.

As a result of these [illegible] have the following intelligence from the Sandwich Islands. We have a letter to Robert Ralston Esq of Portland, Maine, from Lahaina, Island of Maui. 17th Nov. 1835.

To shew still farther, the progress of temperance in the islands of the ocean, we present the following highly pleasing and important information, from New Zealand. (See N30 as above) In view of these facts, have not the friends of temperance, reason to thank God and take courage? The efforts which have been made to prepare the way for the coming of Christ's Kingdom, have been thus far successful. Men are becoming convinced, that, to stupify their faculties so as to prevent the truth of God from operating upon them, is as bad as to resist the operation of that truth. All that remains, is for the advocates of this noble cause to persevere, and for the servants of our Lord to follow in their steps, and take possession of the land thus stripped out, in the name of our King.

There is yet another feature of the main subject, which is assuming somewhat of importance. We refer to what is vulgarly called Teetotalism,—or in other words the pledge of total abstinence from all that can intoxicate. This principle is the only one by which the great reformation

can be effected in England, where the prevailing intemperance arises not from the use of alcoholic drinks, as with us, but from the use of malt liquors and wine. In the southern countries of Europe, also, wine is a more efficient agent in the production of drunkenness, than the far famed Cognac, or any other form of ardent spirits. In these cases there can be no doubt as to expediency, or rather, necessity, of such a course. But in our own country, unfortunately, there exists a difference of opinion. — The whole temperance reformation is boasted of as an expedient of modern times, for the mitigation of an evil which had never existed, to the same alarming extent. It is not one of those fundamental and inflexible, Bible principles which we are bound to carry out to its full extent without waiting to consider its effects. It is a device of human reason, — a mere expedient, — which is not to be made use of, farther than its effects, are found to confer a benefit, adequate to the labor of producing them. It was agreed by all in our country, who gave attention to the subject, that the use of alcohol, in the form of distilled liquors, had become such an alarming evil as to call for extra-judicial action, for its suppression. The blow was aimed directly at the evil, — not at its supposed, or known causes, — for this kind of treatment was too mild for the extremity. It would not do to wait until the hearts and consciences of men could be operated upon, and the conduct, by this means reformed. The very thing to be remedied, was the condition of the man, which would not admit of any effect upon the conduct through the heart and conscience. It was to dig up those, which ~~the~~ the drunkard had buried in the mire of his

degradation, in order that they might again exercise that influence upon the life, for which God had designed them. Not to force them to a proper action with iron bands, but to free them from the heavy shackle with which they were already bound, and restore them to their original freedom and power. — While this principle continued to be the ground of action, all was harmony. But after the wished for success was nearly attained, many changed their ground. Instead of fighting against the evil, they declare a war of extermination against every thing which tends to produce it. Instead of merely striving to suppress drunkenness, which was the only primary object, they commence a crusade with more than European enthusiasm, against alcohol, in all its relations.

As to the results of this new course, your Committee are not prepared to report. They do not consider the application of ~~this new principle~~ it, as sufficiently general or impartial to warrant a conclusion from successful experiment. And the limits of this report will not permit them to adopt the manner of arriving at the conclusion, by argument, however certain.

The number of those who approve of the new mode of action has increased very rapidly. But the accessions, are chiefly from the number of those who were already members of the old temperance society. And the number of new converts to temperance doctrines, who subscribe to the new pledge is small, in comparison with those who adopt the old one only. Yet it is asserted by the advocates of the new principle, that men cannot be kept strictly temperate, until they are prohibited the use of all that can intoxicate. On the other hand it is alledged that to

prohibit the use of wine, destroys in some measure, the freedom of action, which is necessary to a perfect probation. They have not in this case, been found unable to govern themselves, and thus under the necessity of submitting to an extra-judicial act of society. Using this assumed power of legislation farther than is absolutely essential for self preservation, is considered a great evil, by those who oppose the new system. Just as the ancient Romans, who appointed a supreme dictator in cases of great emergency, would have considered it dangerous, and even certain ruin to continue his power as long as there was any prospect of another war.

Our limits will not permit us to state the reasonings of either party more at length. And perhaps it would not be for edification. It is hoped by the Committee, that the subject will receive that careful attention and impartial investigation, which it's merits demand. And that no one will be induced by his feelings, to conclude in a way which reason and sound sense will not justify

26 or. 26 on.

On the subject of "Prison Discipline" your committee would Report. That from the nature of the case they have few facts to communicate as the progress of experiments upon the subject of reforming Criminals is of necessity slow, and the results unsatisfactory until after repeated trials. So our Report must be of a general nature. The good experiment of solitary confinement has become a first principle in the reform of criminals. Founded upon this principle have sprung up the two new systems which are attracting & enlisting the admiration of the world. They are generally known as the Phil. & Auburn ~~plans~~ systems. That of Phil. proceeds upon the plan of absolute confinement, so that the prisoner sees no one but the keeper, and reads no book but the bible, from the time of his entrance to his liberation. While that of Auburn proceeds upon the plan of solitary confinement at night and labour during the day in the general work shop, under restriction of perfect silence, any violation of which is visited with an immediate infliction of the rod. We cannot here discuss the merits of the two systems, but it may be remarked however, that several states have adopted the Auburn plan, on the ground of economy, prisons upon this plan being cheaper in construction and the labour of Convicts can be made more profitable when they are employed together.

Get the Philadelphia system from a fair examination seems to produce the happiest effects upon the reformation of criminals and has been adopted lately by New Jersey, as the best model for her new penitentiary.

But there is another branch of this important ~~system~~ subject that has received but a small share of attention. We refer to the condition of county prisons. In these receptacles are immured, not only the Condemned & the suspected, but those who are detained as witnesses & vagrants. These are left to corrupt each other for a time & are then turned out upon society not only unimproved, but hardened in vice & ripe for the commission of crimes. The consequence is that ~~as~~ they find their way into the State Prisons, and if they happen to be managed on as bad a plan their road is open to the gallows.

The only way then to remedy the evils of our State Prisons is to commence with the county jails, where ~~the~~ ~~birds~~ villains are most generally first caught — and we have no doubt that if a proper discipline was observed a great many would never find themselves in the St. Prisons.

3m.

And the public attention must be arrested, to its great importance. & Legislatures must not fear to spend their money in erecting commodious Prisons, and in giving the Criminals proper religious instruction!